

## Autism Outreach Service Support Service

45 North Lindsay Street  
Enterprise House  
Dundee  
DD1 1PW

Telephone: 01382 226 769

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
6 December 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Scottish Autism

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000275

**Service no:**  
CS2003046736

## About the service

Scottish Autism believe in the power of relationships to change and enhance the lives of the people they support. The service aims to enable autistic people to lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

The Autism Outreach Service in Tayside offers a service to people living in and around Dundee, who live with autism. The service operates seven days a week, including evenings and weekends, providing a service from its base in the centre of Dundee, and also in the wider community.

## About the inspection

This was a full inspection which took place on 27, 28 and 29 November 2024. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with three people using the service and four of their family
- spoke with 11 staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Staff were respectful and treated people with dignity and compassion.
- Staff understood people's support needs and provided consistent support.
- The service supported people to participate in activities and pursuits that interested them.
- Most of the staff told us that their leaders were supportive, approachable and knowledgeable and their colleagues were also supportive.
- We found that staff were enthusiastic and eager to learn and wanted to improve their practice.
- People's support plans set out what their wishes, preferences and desired outcomes were from support.
- The service's policies and procedures were well written, easy to follow and robust.
- Staff supervision should be more structured and be provided regularly.

## From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## How well do we support people's wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated how well the service supported the wellbeing of people experiencing support and overall concluded that the performance of the service in this area was very good. We identified that there were very few areas for improvement and those that did exist had a minimal adverse impact on people's experiences and outcomes.

Staff were enthusiastic in their commitment to supporting people with autism. People were often supported by staff on a one-to-one basis by a small staff team. We heard that people often responded well to the consistency that this offered. We saw that staff had enough time to support people well and the staff we spoke to confirmed that this was the case. We saw warm and positive relationships between staff and the people who use the service. The people we spoke to and their relatives, told us that staff always treated them with compassion, dignity and respect. We observed that staff allowed people the time they needed to complete activities and tasks for themselves. The way people spend their time should be purposeful and promote feelings of wellbeing. Staff understood the health benefits for people engaging in meaningful activities and helped them to participate in activities in the community. We heard from relatives that communication, from staff and the management was very good. They were given an overview of people's day and any concerns of a health and wellbeing nature were always reported swiftly.

Assessment and support planning should reflect people's needs and wishes. We looked at a sample of support plans. We found that support plans were person centred and focused on people's strengths, whilst reflecting their backgrounds, interests and health needs. Some sections of people's support plans were repetitive but, on the whole, they were easy to read and to navigate. We saw some variation in the quality of information in support plans, primarily in the quality of daily notes made by staff, but generally the information they contained was comprehensive. Support plans contained good risk assessment and management plans and clear guidelines on how to support each person. Supported people and their relatives were invited to attend review meetings, where support plans were evaluated and developed to reflect each person's changing circumstances. This ensured support continued to maximise people's quality of life in accordance with their wishes and stated outcomes.

We looked at policies and procedures as these underpin good practice. There was a written statement of the service's aims and objectives that accurately describes the conditions of registration and the service that is offered to people. Policies focused on values and culture, they were person centred and aimed to include supported people in the development of the service.

The service effectively monitored the quality of the support it provided. There was an up-to-date service improvement plan in place, which identified areas for improvement. It stated what resources were required to facilitate improvements, as well as who was responsible for overseeing improvements. There were target or actual completion dates, along with progress or completion reports. We concluded that the service improvement plan was an effective tool in driving improvements in the service. The manager had oversight of the service and used a quality assurance and audit tool, to monitor the ongoing performance of the service.

## How good is our staff team?

## 4 - Good

We evaluated how good the service's staffing was and overall, we concluded that the performance of the service in this area was good. We identified that there were important strengths and taken together these strengths clearly outweighed areas for improvement. These strengths had a significant positive impact on people's experiences and outcomes. We learned that Scottish Autism welcomes applications for employment from people with a lived experience of autism/neurodiversity. This demonstrates the organisations values and commitment to inclusion. The service identified that a diverse staff group can bring additional value to the workplace and to the people it supports.

We found that the service had recruited in accordance with safe recruitment practices. We saw that the service had historically been short staffed. We heard from the manager and staff that this situation had been steadily improving over the last year. Staff described 'pinch points' over the last year; for example, when students on casual contracts left at the end of their studies and during school holidays. Whilst some challenges continued most of the staff told us that the strain they previously experienced, because of staff shortages, was no longer an issue. We concluded that whilst the staff were busy, they no longer felt overwhelmed by their workload.

People should be able to have confidence in the staff who support them because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes. Most staff told us that they had a range of training opportunities and we could see that they had achieved high participation rates in the training available to them. Staff were knowledgeable about some important areas of practice such as adult support and protection, autism, and managing challenging behaviour. We saw that the majority of training courses were online, which many staff found to be a convenient way to access training. Staff told us that training was informative and had helped them to provide better support for people. Training records were clear, which allowed managers to monitor performance.

We received some varied comments from staff about some aspects of the team's functioning. The majority of the staff we spoke to told us that their colleagues, seniors and the manager were all supportive and that communication within the team was good. These staff were very enthusiastic about their work and felt well led. A minority of staff identified some areas of communication where they thought improvements could be made. The manager was aware of these concerns and was working to resolve them.

Most staff told us that seniors and the manager had an open door approach and they could always get advice when they needed it. We also heard that there was a very good on call system, which allowed staff to speak to seniors and managers if they wanted advice and support when working outside office hours. Staff told us that they had appraisals and one to one meetings with their seniors. However, there was a notable variation in the frequency that staff told us that they received formal one to one support or supervision from their seniors. When we looked at a sample of staff records, we also found that the quality of the records of one-to-one supervision sessions were varied, and we concluded that more consistency was required. We are making an area for improvement in respect of staff supervision (**see area for improvement 1**).

## Areas for improvement

1. To promote a culture of continuous improvement the provider should ensure that all staff receive regular, structured supervision, which is appropriate to their role.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14) and 'I use a service which is well led and well managed' (HSCS 4.23).

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
1.3 People's health and wellbeing benefits from their care and support	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together	4 - Good

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Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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