

**Enter & View  
The Learning Centre,  
Romford**

**4 July 2016**



## What is Healthwatch Havering?

Healthwatch Havering is the local consumer champion for both health and social care. Our aim is to give local citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided for all individuals locally.

We are an independent organisation, established by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, and are able to employ our own staff and involve lay people/volunteers so that we can become the influential and effective voice of the public.

Healthwatch Havering is a Company Limited by Guarantee, managed by three part-time directors, including the Chairman and the Company Secretary, supported by two part-time staff and a number of volunteers, both from professional health and social care backgrounds and people who have an interest in health or social care issues.

### Why is this important to you and your family and friends?

Following the public inquiry into the failings at Mid-Staffordshire Hospital, the Francis report reinforced the importance of the voices of patients and their relatives within the health and social care system.

Healthwatch England is the national organisation which enables the collective views of the people who use NHS and social services to influence national policy, advice and guidance.

Healthwatch Havering is your local organisation, enabling you on behalf of yourself, your family and your friends to ensure views and concerns about the local health and social services are understood.

Your contribution is vital in helping to build a picture of where services are doing well and where they need to be improved. This will help and support the Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Local Authority to make sure their services really are designed to meet citizens' needs.

***'You make a living by what you get,  
but you make a life by what you give.'***  
**Winston Churchill**

## **What is an Enter and View?**

Under Section 221 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Healthwatch Havering has statutory powers to carry out Enter and View visits to publicly funded health and social care services in the borough, such as hospitals, GP practices, care homes and dental surgeries, to observe how a service is being run and make any necessary recommendations for improvement.

These visits can be prompted not only by Healthwatch Havering becoming aware of specific issues about the service or after investigation, but also because a service has a good reputation and we would like to know what it is that makes it special.

Enter & View visits are undertaken by representatives of Healthwatch Havering who have been duly authorised by the Board to carry out visits. Prior to authorisation, representatives receive training in Enter and View, Safeguarding Adults, the Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberties. They also undergo Disclosure Barring Service checks.

Although this visit was not undertaken as part of Healthwatch Havering's 'Enter and View' programme of visits using statutory powers, its content was similar and this report sets out the findings of Healthwatch participants.

The team appointed to carry out this visit was accompanied by a work-experience student from the Coopers' Company & Coborn School, Upminster, and this report is based substantially upon work done by her during the period of her assignment.

## **Background and purpose of the visit:**

Healthwatch Havering (HH) is aiming to visit all health and social care facilities in the borough. This is a way of ensuring that all services delivered are acceptable and the safety of the resident is not compromised in any way.

## The Centre - a general description

The Learning Centre (also known as “TLC” and referred to in this report as “the Centre”) aims to provide a welcoming and encouraging environment where students are able to learn and feel valued and safe. The Centre’s main aim is to make sure the students are happy and enjoy each day. The Centre is registered with ASDAN (Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network). They offer a wide range of activities and courses for the students to participate in and they are taught life skills and subjects which are both accredited and non-accredited. The Centre allows students to work at their own pace in groups or as an individual. They all have the support and guidance from facilitators, support workers and one-to-one support staff.

The Centre offers placements to students who have access to Direct Payments, Individual Budgets or private funding. The Centre is offered mainly to students from Havering but also from the neighbouring areas of Barking & Dagenham, Redbridge and Thurrock. Attendance at the Centre costs six direct payments per day, based on a Havering Direct Payment cost and the Centre provides transport at no additional cost for those students who live within Havering. They can be collected and returned to home using the Centre’s own transport, which includes drivers and escorts. Some students prefer to make their own way to the Centre each day. Students who live outside the borough are expected to make their own transport arrangements with their local authority; they are expected to arrive at 10am for registration and morning refreshments, so they can be ready to start the first curriculum session by 10:30am.

When families show interest in the Centre, they meet the staff and discuss what they want to achieve at the Centre; this is also the time when prospective students can discuss the types of activities and courses that they want to try. After this, the Centre offers two “taster” days for the student

to interact with and meet some of the students already at the Centre and to also allow them to get a taste for what the Centre has on offer and the different courses and activities available. After this, the parents apply to the social services panel, which then considers the student's funding options, which in turn determines how many days the student is able to attend the Centre.

The Centre does not have any inspections from the local authority or from any government body, because currently in England there are no inspectorate bodies who inspect day service provision. Despite that, the Centre welcomes people to come in and see the work that they are achieving.

The students who attend the Centre are aged from 19 to around 70; the average age for the Centre is between 25 and 40 years old. Students can join the Centre at any age from when they leave school and will all go through the same process when they show interest in joining. Students are able to join at any point during the academic year. The Centre provides open days for parents and carers, including invitations to potential new students to visit.

Attendance at the day centre averages between 30-45 students a day (four of whom are wheelchair users who attend 3 - 5 days a week). With around 14 members of staff (excluding the transport team), there is a staff to student ratio of about 1:4. For group activities, students are placed into groups of 8-10, with 3 staff members to help and support them.

The day is scheduled so that the students arrive and have morning refreshments from 10am-10:30am and then have their morning curriculum timetabled session until 12 noon. There is an hour and a half for the lunch break, with access to the leisure and recreation area. The afternoon

activities begin at 13:30, and includes a twenty-minute break for refreshments. By 16:00, the students have departed or are ready to go home.

The activities on offer to the students include cooking, photography, physical education, healthy living, arts and crafts, Olympic games project, history, newsletter, wider world, drama and gardening, which are both accredited and non-accredited. The Centre has a wide range of facilities, including a lift. There are different rooms such as kitchen areas for cooking, rooms for learning different life skills and an IT suite for students to work on research projects and to create artistic work. There is a large games room downstairs with a lot of open space and table tennis and football tables for the students' use.

The games room is also used for presentation evenings where students, parents and carers are invited along to celebrate students' achievements throughout the year and the presentation of certificates and awards. An Awards Ceremony generally takes place around Christmas time so that students can make and serve mince pies to the guests.

Upon entering the Centre, all students are checked in and any visitors are logged and must sign in and out of the premises. Parents and carers of students are welcome at any time to come along and visit. Each day at the Centre is planned to a structured timetable. On the day that the team visited, activities on offer to the students included cooking, photography and an Olympic based task. The costings or materials of group activities are included in the cost per day, with the only additional cost being a donation towards the tea, coffee and cold drink refreshments at breaks and lunch time. The proceeds from the refreshments are used to fund Christmas celebrations. Students are asked to bring a packed lunch with them each day, unless it is part of the planned group session.

The Centre began as a family business and as it has grown, additional staff have contributed towards its friendly caring atmosphere. Many staff are experienced in working within the care and education system. All the staff are DBS checked and are aware of the different situations that they may come across. Most staff are trained in administering Buccal Midazolam to students but they do not administer injections. All staff have also taken an epilepsy awareness course.

The Centre is open throughout the year, only shutting on public holidays. Eight of these weeks, known as Non-Operational Weeks, are used as a break from the usual curriculum groups for fun activities and outings such as pub lunches, museums, bowling, ballroom dancing, music theatre workshop. These weeks are spaced throughout the academic year including seasonal events such as Christmas, Easter and Whitsun. The weeks include more leisure based activities which can involve external people coming in for activities such as dancing sessions or educational visits out of the Centre.

The Centre has a total of around 80 students and 40 members of staff, one of whom is a volunteer. The Centre is open from the hours of 10am until 4pm, Monday - Friday. The Centre has capacity to accommodate more students. Many of the students have just left school and families and carers have chosen the Learning Centre instead of sending them to a college or other local authority placements.

‘Friends of The Learning Centre’ are a group of people (mainly parents, carers and staff at the Centre) who help raise money for the Centre by arranging different events throughout the year. The money raised is used to fund equipment for the students and to provide other benefits. The Centre supports St Francis Hospice throughout the year by fund raising events, including selling second hand books in the reception for visitors to buy and

also bookmarks and cards which have been hand-made by the students. All the money so raised goes to the Hospice.

## The visit

The team's visit took place in two parts; they first met with the Director, who told them about the Centre and answered their questions, and they were then taken on a tour of the Centre and were able to talk to the students and staff.

## Summary of observations

- Staff gave students good support and students were given a high level of care. The relationship between staff and students was very good and the students appeared to trust the staff.
- Support was tailored to each student's needs and individual care plans were in place, which had been made after meeting with each student.
- Students were encouraged to get involved and to help each other with tasks and projects during their curriculum-based activities.
- The staff interacted well with the students and created a welcoming environment for them to feel safe in.
- The building itself was very large and all rooms had wide open space, allowing enough room for wheelchair users to travel around the Centre comfortably.
- The Centre had brightly decorated walls which the students had participated in creating and had bright rooms with lots of windows, creating natural light in all of them and brightening the whole Centre. There was plenty of information placed on the walls for students, staff and visitors, including their achievements and creations.



- The reception was bright and welcoming. with the students being able to register themselves. It was spacious and securely locked throughout the day.
- All staff were aware of safeguarding and had undergone necessary training.
- The Centre is not directly commissioned by the Council, but parents and carers purchase the service using a direct payment allocated by Social Services.
- The students were encouraged to get involved with the activities and to interact with other students during their activities and at lunchtime.

## Detailed observations

### *Environment*

The Centre was clean and extremely spacious, with good lighting and a comfortable temperature. There were no unpleasant odours in any of the rooms. All the furniture and decoration was in good condition and the walls around the classrooms were decorated with the work of students, which included an Olympic display, fireworks display, umbrella display and a cooking display. The floor on the lower level of the Centre was carpeted but the management were considering installing replacement non-slip vinyl flooring, to allow wheelchair users to move around easily. This would also brighten up the room as the carpet at the moment is a dull colour. All the areas that the team visited were very clean and tidy.

On arrival all students were greeted and welcomed by a member of staff in the reception area.

There was a large space for movement in the Centre. Each room was large enough to fit tables and chairs in and still have room for staff and students to be able to move around easily. The space was very good for wheelchair users and the Centre has provided the students with a lift to allow them access to the upstairs facilities as well.

The team were welcomed by all the staff as they entered the Centre and when they were taken on a tour and were looking around staff were extremely pleasant and willing to talk.

The Centre itself did not have much outdoor space but there was a small area at the front for growing plants. The Centre owned an allotment off-site which provided a good opportunity for activity for the students to get involved in.

### *Privacy and Respect*

Students were called by their preferred name, and when some of them introduced themselves to the team they always used their first name or their abbreviated name. All rooms had been decorated with students' work and in a style based on what that room was used for.

All students had access to a quiet room which they could use if they needed some time to themselves, and they seemed to feel familiar and safe within the Centre and with the staff themselves.

All bathrooms were big and spacious. They were very clean and equipped with the facilities that the students needed. There were male and female toilets upstairs and another set downstairs. Inside the toilets was information on the walls for anyone that needed any assistance or help.

### *Recreation, social and pastoral care*

Each student has a care plan meeting, which is arranged by their social services care manager who meets with the families, carers and any external provider of the student, to talk about their progress and how they are doing, discussing their achievements and how they would progress in the future.

At The Learning Centre their Curriculum Coordinator meets with each student to discuss what they would like to do in the next curriculum year. Any student unhappy with one of their curriculum sessions can raise any changes they would like with Centre staff, who will try to sort the problem out.

The Centre had the facilities required to teach the students all the courses that were on offer. Different rooms were used for different activities. The students were encouraged and supported to participate by the staff and were helped to do so.

When the team were shown around the Centre, they went into the photography class, where students were developing portfolios which they would be able to keep. These included the different tasks they had been completing over the past couple of weeks or months. This class was taking place in the IT suite and allowed the students to access to computers. Some were printing photos they had taken while others were playing educational games and completing jigsaw puzzles on the computer. The environment was relaxed and the students were able to work at their own pace. All of the students that were participating in this activity looked engaged and happy.

The activities on offer to the students took place mainly within the Centre but some were arranged off site, usually those taking place in the non-operational weeks.

The kitchens allowed students to cook their own meals and were in excellent condition. The courses that were held in the kitchen allowed students to take part in cooking their own meals and to serve to other people, creating a sense of achievement for them. On the day that the team visited, a group of students were in the ground floor kitchen making Apricot Crumble Shortbread. The team was told that in the non-operational weeks the students were sometimes able to cook their own lunches instead of bringing a packed lunch.

A connection between a downstairs room and one of the kitchens had created a small dining area for the students, enabling them to interact well with staff and to witness what happened in the kitchen.

The team observed students in the kitchen interacting with the staff, showing that they were comfortable with them. Some came and introduced themselves to the team, which demonstrated well that they felt confident at the Centre. The team were also told by one of the students that they had them finished a game where the person catching a ball had to name a country as they did so, incorporating fun and a small part of the education. They all appeared to have enjoyed this game.

### *Food, daily routine and choice*

During the team's visit, they were able to see part of the first curriculum session of the day and also the transition period of the morning session into lunch. This was a very relaxed transition and although all happens at around 12 noon, it was relaxed and students were able when ready to go to lunch. Each student had brought in their own packed lunch, which allowed them to

eat the food that they wanted to eat, but they could supplement their own lunch by buying refreshments for around 20p. The students ate in communal areas, but were not required to use a set place. From the team's observation the only place in which nothing could be eaten or drunk was the IT suite.

The day is set into the two curriculum sessions with lunch in between them. When it comes to choosing the activities that the students want to take part in, it is mostly their own choice. On joining, a student would meet the course co-ordinator to discuss what they want to do, and the Centre would try as much as possible to facilitate their choices. The staff made clear to the team that choices were more about what the student wants to do rather than what the Centre would allow them to do. If a student had a problem with an activity or were unhappy with it, the Centre would try to resolve it as best as possible. When joining, it was sometimes not possible for students to gain their first choice of activities but the Centre would try to accommodate the student's choices so far as possible and practicable.

The Centre had ensured that each day there was at least one member of staff on duty who was first aid trained. In total there were 12 staff members who are trained in first aid, ensuring that at least three trained members of staff were on site each day.

### *Personal care, interactions with staff*

All the students seemed very comfortable around staff and were always willing to talk to them. When the team were observing classes the students would talk to them, introduce themselves and ask the team members' names. The staff made the place very inviting and were able to joke around with the students. The team observed the staff interacting well with the students and supporting them in their activities. As all of the staff were

friends or family members, it created a comfortable environment and allowed the students to feel relaxed.

In the curriculum sessions the students were helped by around 3 staff members, including a carer, a trainer for the activities and a helper. Some students had 1 to 1 help within these groups, whereas others were helped within their group. In one of sessions on the day of the visit they were creating some brightly coloured posters for the open evening. They were Olympic based as a lot of activities at the Centre at the moment relate to the coming Olympic games. One of the students told the team that they were having their own Olympics around mid-August. The students also showed us some of their previous projects, which included t-shirt printing that they were going to display at the imminent open evening.

Students seemed to trust the members of staff and, from the team's observations, it looked as though if the students had an issue they would be able to confide in the staff at the Centre. If an observer was to visit the Centre, they would not be able to tell which students were new and who had been there for a while as they all seemed well-settled and comfortable with the staff that were around them. The students were all confident in talking to visitors and were polite and welcoming

All staff seem to listen well to the student's needs and helped them if they had a problem with something. Clear programmes were set out for each student and there was a clear reporting system, which appeared to be kept up to date.

If a student required help with a wound dressing, a district nurse was able to come in, arranged by the family or carer of the student or the Centre themselves.

At the time of the team's visit there were no external carers or visitors who could be asked their opinion of the Centre but all staff and students seemed extremely happy there and the team felt it was a very welcoming and safe environment for the staff, students and visitors

Overall though, the team was very impressed with the work that the Centre is doing. All students seemed exceptionally settled and happy. The staff appeared to be enjoying their jobs and were encouraging the students well. The work that the Centre is doing is very impressive and more people should be aware of it.

### Recommendations

- That the Centre pursue changing the carpet in the ground floor teaching rooms to non-slip vinyl flooring, to enable the room to be even brighter and to provide easier access for wheelchair users.
- That consideration be given to carrying out similar carpet replacement throughout the Centre.

The team would like to thank all staff and students who were seen during the visit for their help and co-operation, which is much appreciated.

### Disclaimer

This report relates to the visit on 4 July 2016 and is representative only of those students and staff who participated. It does not seek to be representative of all service users and/or staff.





## Participation in Healthwatch Havering

Local people who have time to spare are welcome to join us as volunteers. We need both people who work in health or social care services, and those who are simply interested in getting the best possible health and social care services for the people of Havering.

Our aim is to develop wide, comprehensive and inclusive involvement in Healthwatch Havering, to allow every individual and organisation of the Havering Community to have a role and a voice at a level they feel appropriate to their personal circumstances.

**We are looking for:**

### Members

This is the key working role. For some, this role will provide an opportunity to help improve an area of health and social care where they, their families or friends have experienced problems or difficulties. Very often a life experience has encouraged people to think about giving something back to the local community or simply personal circumstances now allow individuals to have time to develop themselves. This role will enable people to extend their networks, and can help prepare for college, university or a change in the working life. There is no need for any prior experience in health or social care for this role.

The role provides the face to face contact with the community, listening, helping, signposting, providing advice. It also is part of ensuring the most isolated people within our community have a voice.

Some Members may wish to become **Specialists**, developing and using expertise in a particular area of social care or health services.

### Supporters

Participation as a Supporter is open to every citizen and organisation that lives or operates within the London Borough of Havering. Supporters ensure that Healthwatch is rooted in the community and acts with a view to ensure that Healthwatch Havering represents and promotes community involvement in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of health and social services.

## Interested? Want to know more?

Call us on **01708 303 300**; or email  
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