

Oakwood Hall

Independent Evaluation Summary

“There is light at the end of the tunnel where I thought there wasn’t any.”

Resident

Oakwood Hall is a twelve-bed dual registered nursing and residential care home for people whose mental health needs cannot be satisfactorily met from other services.

It allows stays of up to five years, with 24-hour staffing including a registered mental nurse on duty at all times. Its staff team comprises seven registered mental health nurses, seven support workers and a chef.

Oakwood Hall provides a safe, stable, non-institutional and therapeutic residential environment in which service users are able to address those behaviours which have led them to be excluded from other services, engage in the rehabilitative process and develop to their full potential. This enables clients to move on to live more independently with an improved quality of life.

Real-Improvement carried out an independent evaluation of Oakwood Hall, considering evidence of the outcomes and value for money this service provides. Interviews were had with Oakwood staff, residents, other Community Links managers and representatives of many other organisations.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Very high success rate of moving towards independent living
- Sustained recovery of residents
- Ethos of mutual support and shared living
- Unique within Leeds
- Achieves cost benefits for NHS and Adult Social Care services
- Ongoing contact once resident has left Oakwood Hall

SUSTAINED PROGRESS

“If you want help, if you want to change, if you want to get on in life, then Oakwood Hall is the place.”

Former Resident

A key feature identified by the report is sustained recovery. Residents of Oakwood Hall normally move onto some other form of supported accommodation, generally with much less intensive support. All former residents interviewed were living in this way.

This means people do not revert to the previous cycle of repeated inpatient admissions and failed placements, meaning a much improved quality of life. Whilst returning to paid employment may be problematic for individuals with such complex needs, many of the former residents displayed a positive attitude and were doing voluntary work.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Using national data for a typical day bed costs for low secure and medium secure inpatient NHS services, Oakwood Hall proves to be good value for money. Sustained progress of individuals means that benefits to the NHS and Adult Social Care continue after individuals have left as they can be supported in the community.

“There is no alternative quite like Oakwood Hall. It emulates the positive parts of forensic services treatment outside a ward environment.”

Referrers

Additionally, Oakwood Hall provides additional support for people once they have left. One bed is reserved for respite stays, allowing former residents to come back for short periods to support their continued recovery. The facility also offers day visits, telephone support and a respite user network group to former residents.

CULTURE

“I’ve been in services 9 years and this is the best team in any service I’ve been in.”

Resident

The most important factor identified by the residents was the staff and the way they work. There is an ethos of mutual support and shared living, with staff and residents eating together at meal times. This sense of community helps to integrate residents back into more normal ways of living. There is a strong culture of ‘valuing people and working together to change lives’. Residents respond positively to the staff.

This culture is also highly valued by other professionals working with Oakwood Hall.

UNIQUE

Oakwood Hall was found to be unique in Leeds, with a longer length of stay, high staffing levels and a culture of shared living. Many residents may have had unsuccessful placements in other facilities and Oakwood Hall can be considered a ‘last resort’ for some. Referrers found it hard to think of suitable alternatives for Oakwood Hall residents.

“Oakwood Hall has developed a skill set and experience unique in managing such [challenging] cases.”

Referrers

What do the residents value about Community Links?

Residents identified the following factors as most important to making a difference:

1. Staff and the way they work – valuing individuals and create a sense of community
2. Time and length of stay – residents have time to adjust and learn how to live independently
3. Environment – a relaxed, informal and safe atmosphere

CASE STUDIES

Case Study A:

Resident A has recently left Oakwood Hall after a stay of almost 5 years there. She has a history of severe mental illness, and during her stay at Oakwood Hall was readmitted to hospital as an inpatient on several occasions. She returned to Oakwood Hall after each spell however, and gradually made progress, to the extent that she was eventually able to participate as a member of Community Links' interview panels. She has now moved to short-term supported accommodation at one of Leeds CC's Transitional Housing Units, and sees this as a step towards living independently in a flat of her own. When interviewed, she was looking after her current flat by herself and managing to do more by herself than she could ever have done before. She was also hoping to find voluntary work in the future.

Case Study B:

Resident B was not interviewed, but was cited as one of very few examples (one other was mentioned by a referrer) where Oakwood Hall had not yet managed to achieve the progress they were seeking. This resident presented a very high risk of self-harm and possible suicide, did not really engage at Oakwood Hall, and had to be readmitted as a hospital inpatient on several occasions. Ultimately, she returned to live with her parents, which is not a solution in her case. However, she has agreed to accept further help as a day respite user, and Oakwood Hall is hoping to re-establish its relationship with her from this base.

Case Study C:

Resident C has been at Oakwood Hall for 3½ years, having been in hospital for five years prior to that. He felt that Oakwood Hall was a big step from hospital, as in hospital he did not feel he was getting any better but just staying the same. At Oakwood Hall, he described feeling "100% better" and felt he was "at the back end" of his illness. Whilst some of the future aspirations he described at interview might be unrealistic, he was determined that he would not be returning to hospital again and felt positive about the future.

Case Study D:

Resident D has been at Oakwood Hall for a year and felt he had made considerable progress. He was very appreciative of the staff and the general environment at Oakwood Hall – he particularly felt that staff were really caring and didn't judge people. He had engaged with a number of activities such as the gardening group, walking, and outings to Inkwell Arts where he had been making jewellery and pictures. He also felt he was becoming more sociable and could see himself at some point in the future moving on to some form of more independent communal living.

Case Study E:

Resident E left Oakwood Hall several years ago and is now living independently in her own accommodation. Although her stay at Oakwood Hall presented some issues with drug use, the transition to living in the community was eventually managed successfully, and she now lives independently with some support. This includes respite visits to Oakwood Hall, where she maintains contact with staff who supported her during her stay. She is currently doing voluntary work with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), and her progress is illustrated by her current role as a Volunteer Officer with TCV. This is in effect a "lead volunteer" role with some responsibility for helping other volunteers, and is a position from which TCV sometimes recruits permanent staff.